



FREE

# South Boston Online

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## CIVIC & NON-PROFIT

by Rebecca Gloe

Condon Elementary School students are included in the 8,000 students reached this year by ReadBoston's Family Literacy Project.

An ambassador for literacy, ReadBoston's Family Literacy Project (FLP) brings classroom-based home lending libraries and establishes parent-teacher conferences in our communities' elementary schools. The FLP is nearly doubling its scope this year to include 24 Boston Public Schools.

The City of Boston early literacy campaign, now in the Condon Elementary School, is reaching 800 students in South Boston this year.

"The FLP is really helping to bring together several of Condon's literacy-related goals," said Condon Elementary School Librarian Chris Lopez. "I believe in the studies showing that if kids are read to and if kids read at home that they will become lifelong learners. The FLP program at Condon is providing support for our teachers to implement a literacy and language skills educational program that involves entire families in their children's learning while staying user-friendly."

Teachers in participating schools establish classroom lending libraries to send books home at least four times

## ReadBoston brings children and families together

a week with their students and agree to hold parent-teacher conferences twice yearly. Fulfilling a FLP goal of family involvement in literacy education, teachers work collaboratively with families to help students learn to read. Students are expected to read to their parents or have their parents read to them at least four times per week for 20-30 minutes. Students chart the number of books they read and complete a reading response form for the books they take home.

"We started the FLP program this fall and we have quickly gained a core group of teachers who are actively supporting the project," said Lopez. "The ReadBoston home-reading logs are going home with students and coming back completed and the children are reading more at home."

ReadBoston provides both technical and financial assistance for the FLP. Each year, ReadBoston provides a full-time work force for the FLP. Project coordinator Heidi Sampson places five AmeriCorps\*VISTA (Volunteers In Service to America) members to each work with several schools coordinating events and acting as literacy advocates.

Participating schools receive funding for new books from ReadBoston for three years, during which time the school

works to make the program self-sustainable. The first year schools receive \$15 per student to be spent on books. For the next two years, each classroom receives \$100 to supplement their growing classroom libraries. During this time the schools work to make the FLP become self-reliant.

"The FLP is most successful at schools that make reading a priority. The schools we work with take our model and adapt it to the specific needs present at their school. They add a lot of great ideas and innovation to the FLP and it truly becomes each school's personalized program," said ReadBoston AmeriCorps\*VISTA Sarah Ernst-Edwards. "The sustainability goal for the FLP is that the program becomes an integrated part of the school's daily processes."

"We are working to reach out to all parents and to help them feel comfortable and involved in the program," said Lopez. "As a bilingual school, we are adding on to the FLP by providing multi-lingual materials and making it accessible to all of our students. ReadBoston is providing us with Books on Tape which we are working on translating into Cape Verde Creole and other languages native to our students."

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